Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Lease Sale 144

Public Hearings

Anchorage

1	DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
2	MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE 949 East 36th Avenue
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7	OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT
8	PUBLIC HEARING
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12	Fourth Floor Conference Room
13	Minerals Management Service Anchorage, Alaska
14	Thursday, October 26, 1995
15	12:00 o'clock noon
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18	MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE PANEL MEMBERS
19	Ms. Judy Gottlieb, Regional Director of the Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region
20	Mr. Rance Wall, Regional Supervisor for Resource
21	Evaluation
22	Mr. Jeff Walker, Special Assistant to the Regional Director
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24	
25	Proceedings recorded by electronic sound recording. Transcript produced by transcription service.

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1995

3 (On record at 12:00 noon)

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COURT REPORTER: On record.

MS. GOTTLIEB: Welcome to the hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Federal Oil and Gas Lease Sale 144 in the Beaufort Sea. The area that's discussed in the Environmental Impact Statement is shown on the map behind me. Yes. Or we have a map showing the area.

My name is Judy Gottlieb. I'm the Regional Director of the Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region. Other panel members include Rance Wall, Resource Evaluation Regional Supervisor and Jeff Walker, my Special Assistant. This is our first public hearing, and others will be held November 6 through 8 in Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow, respectively.

If you would, as a testifier, please state your name and address and the organization or agency you represent. We may need for you to spell your name just to make sure we have it clearly. If you have any prepared testimony, please provide a copy for us to the Court Reporter. And we would like testifiers, of course, to come up to the microphone. Our Recorder is making a verbatim transcript. Everything that is spoken here while we are in session will be recorded, and if you would like a copy you may see Cindy about obtaining one.

The purpose of this hearing is to improve the quality

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of the Environmental Impact Statement before it is put in final Speakers will not necessarily be questioned unless one of us has a need to have some facts clarified or obtain additional information.

The comment period for this document closes November 20th. Until that time, we will accept written statements from anyone who would prefer to make written rather than oral Those written comments and statements should be sent to us at 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage 99508. Again, the comment period ends on November 20th.

And so I think our first testifier, please come forward.

(Pause)

PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF MR. ROBERT K. BELL

Thank you, Madam Chairman. My name is Robert Bell. I am Chairman of the Fisheries Joint Management Committee which is a legislatedely based co-management body in Canada's Western Arctic created as a result of the Inuvialuit final agreement and the subsequent legislation that followed to settle a land claim. I have a card here that I'll leave here with you.

> MS. GOTTLIEB: Great.

BY MR. BELL (Resuming):

I first of all appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to you. I would -- what I would like to say is largely on behalf of the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic,

folks who live in the area directly east of the area under consideration for the gas and oil lease sale.

Like the Inupiat of your North Slope, the Inuvialuit have occupied the Yukon North Slope and the adjacent land and islands in and around the Mackenzie Delta for thousands of years. Like the folks on the Alaska North Slope, many Inuvialuit choose to follow a subsistence lifestyle and are therefore dependent upon wildlife, both marine and terrestrial, for their well-being. It's therefore not surprising that when they signed their own land claim agreement with the government of Canada in 1984, that agreement contains some very strong provisions to deal with the impacts of developments that were anticipated for this settlement region, especially those related to oil and gas.

The land claim established a two-tiered screening and review process to consider all development activities and assured the Inuvialuit that they would have equal represent——representation with government at both the initial screening levels and the review processes. Thus, within the settlement region, the Inuvialuit feel that they have the tools to protect and give preference to their subsistence lifestyle.

While the Inuvialuit have every confidence that the review process -- processes which are planned for the various developmental activities that may be contemplated for the Alaska North Slope will be every bit as rigorous and as

comprehensive as their own, they do wish to point out that this particular impact statement pays scant attention to the fact that many of the resources at risk are shared resources. That is, they are hunted and harvested on both sides of the Alaska/Canada border.

For some species, such as beluga and bowhead whales, the coastal waters off the Alaska North Slope form a highway, providing passage to and from wintering areas to the west and south and summering areas in the Canadian Beaufort Sea.

Belugas whales, particularly, are important culturally and as a food source in the settlement region.

The waters of the Beaufort Sea support a polar bear population that is hunted extensively in both Canada and Alaska. That it is a shared population is supported by extensive scientific research. Acknowledging this fact, wildlife biologists on both sides of the border jointly provide management advice to the Alaska/Inuvialuit Polar Bear Commission so that the population can be managed sustainably for the benefit of both Inuvialuit and Alaskans. Yet this is the population that will be put at risk when the oil spills that the stats -- statisticians say are almost in- -- inevitable do occur.

This is also the case for large populations of other subsistence resources, such as migratory waterfowl. These resources may be more at risk even, since the lethal effects of

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relatively small amounts of oil are well documented. Within the area of potential impacts, such effects are likely to be both acute and chronic as there exists the likelihood of severe degradation of critical habitats such as staging and nesting areas.

Many of the fish species that will be at risk as a result of subsequent activities related to this EIS are migratory in nature. Some of these are important in both areas in a food chain sense, providing energy inputs for higher levels in the system. Others, like corregonids, herring, and arctic char are food fish and end up in the nets and on the dinner tables on both sides of the border.

Now, the Inuvialuit are quite able to qualify and quantify all of the above, should it be necessary. They have been conducting a comprehensive harvest study for the past eight years and know with accuracy the number of belugas whales harvested, the number of polar bears taken from the shared population, the volume of fish caught by species, by household, and by community. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons they decided to implement such a comprehensive and expensive harvest study was to provide themselves with the information necessary so that they could negotiate compensation agreements with industry in Canada.

Panel, I don't want to take any more of your time.

However, I do want to assure you that the Inuvialuit feel that

1 they have a great deal at stake in this process and the likely 2 subsequent developments. They feel that because of the potential negative impacts on their traditional and subsistence 3 way of life, their concerns must be taken into account in the 4 5 EIS process. They are prepared to contribute information and 6 knowledge to the extent that their resources allow. 7 MS. GOTTLIEB: Thanks. We certainly would like to 8 get information on those particular harvest studies. 9 would be helpful to us. And I guess I also wondered, I'm sure 10 it is in the study, whether they take narwhals? 11 MR. BELL: No. Narwhals are very incidental in our 12 area. 13 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. Thanks. 14 (Pause) 15 MR. BELL: I could leave a copy of this if it would 16 be helpful. 17 MS. GOTTLIEB: It would be great. We sure would like 18 a card and we'll..... 19 MR. BELL: Sure. 20 MS. GOTTLIEB: We can be in touch with you.... 21 MR. BELL: Sure. 22 MS. GOTTLIEB:about getting some of those studies. 23 24 MR. BELL: Yes. And I'd just point out that as my 25 technology failed once more and I had to fax this to myself

to -- so that I could..... 1 2 MS. GOTTLIEB: We could make an extra copy. 3 MR. BELL: Yes, that would be.... 4 MS. GOTTLIEB: Yeah. And you're coming over to 5 Kaktovik as well? 6 I won't be there. We -- the Game Council, MR. BELL: 7 the Inuvialuit Game Council, which is the body that represents the collective interests in renewable resources for the 8 9 Inuvialuit, are planning to have a delegate there. have to recognize that the only way to get over is to charter 10 from Inuvialuit and its 10 or 15 thousand dollars to do it. 11 12 it's a -- if they are able to make it, that's another signal of 13 their interests. 14 MS. GOTTLIEB: Right. Right. 15 MR. WALKER: Are your harvest studies specific to the Canadian side, or is that inclusive of both sides of the 16 17 border? 18 MR. BELL: Just inside the settlement regions, or 19 just to the Alaska border. 20 MR. WALKER: Okay. 21 MS. GOTTLIEB: Carl, you're welcome to come up. 22 (Pause) 23 Going to have to smash my knees on the MR. HILDE: 24 table here. 25 (Laughter - Pause)

PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF MR. CARL HILDE

Okay. My name is Carl Hilde. I'm a biologist with the Indigenous Peoples Council for Marine Mammals, and I work at the Rural Alaska Community Action Program. I appreciate the opportunity to come in to this hearing. I double-checked my notice a couple different times, and I thought 12:00 o'clock noon was a strange time to start a hearing. I brought my lunch just 'cause I figured I might have to sit here for awhile, and I wasn't sure.

(Laughter)

But let me jump into my comments here; mine go pretty much through the order of the document. I haven't actually even gotten through the entire piece, and I will be submitting written comments here in the next month so that I can have a full set of comments. But there were some pieces here that I found quite disturbing.

As I looked at this document, I anticipate that this is based on other documents that have been written in the past and am surprised at some major components that I believe to be lacking from this document that needs to be considered in the final EIS that's prepared. So I'll get into this right now.

On page II, Roman Numeral II-4, there's a list of stipulations that need to be considered for the document, and one of those is No. 5, which is for the subsistence and bowhead whale activities. And I was very pleased to see that this was

specifically outlined in this document. But at the same time, under No. 1 and No. 4 -- which I think I better just refer to here. This is II-4. The point under the No. 1 portion is the protection of biological resources. Point No. 4 is to modify operations to ensure that significant biological populations or habitats deserving protection are not adversely affected.

It's a nice general statement, and as I went further through the document, I was impressed with the fact that there wasn't a whole lot of substantiation. And someplace in this document I really think it needs to be spelled out that the Marine Mammal Protection Act has clearly stated what the definition of "take" is. And I find, later, that definition. But the concern here is that within the Marine Mammal Protection Act, it states clearly that in order to have that kind of incidental take, that if you anticipate that this is going to happen, you have to have a permit to do so.

Several years ago the oil companies asked for a blanket permit for polar bear issues from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And just this past year that was -- actually, about two years ago now, that was approved but with the condition that within 18 months, a polar bear habitat strategy needed to be completed. That has been done, and so this is proceeding. However, if my memory serves me correctly, and I will be verifying this, the limit for that particular activity is from the border of the Arctic National Wildlife

Reserve heading west. So it's not inclusive of this lease sale area.

So the question would be, What happens to the areas north of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that is not included in that incidental take permit for polar bears and walrus? Likewise, that's just for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It does not include all of the other species mammal species that are covered under the U.S. -- under the National Marine Fisheries Service.

And as is specifically mentioned in here, bowheads -you know, I think it's -- it's good throughout this whole
document. You have a section on bowhead whales. It is an
endangered species, so it needs to be specified.

Polar bears are talked about. However, information on all of the other seals, I think, is relatively limited in this. Walrus are mentioned, and they don't get into this lease area to any great extent. But what I found absolutely shocking is the fact that even though there's a reference to grey whale, there's no other information in this document that deals at all with grey whales, even though it's suggested -- and I'll set out the specific rec- -- point where there's a conflict in the document.

Now, I understand, from talking to the National

Marine Fisheries Service, that the oil companies have requested
a blanket permit for incidental non-lethal take nationally for

marine mammals, but that has not been approved to date. And so until that is, this could be a huge hang-up for the oil and gas lease sale as, throughout this document, it is mentioned that there may be situations where there would be spills, where there would be activity that would disturbed, and that is considered a take of these marine mammals, and so that an incidental take permit would be required for any specific activity.

So if it -- if they don't get a blanket permit for these incidental takes they'd have to be looking at every activity that was used for the development of this area would have to be specifically permitted, and it would be quite a process.

Also, that all of those permits must be coordinated with the local subsistence users. So there is a process where they -- the oil companies or whoever would be developing these lease sales -- would have to verify that they have met with local subsistence users and that there has been documentation of those meetings.

I think that at least this should be mentioned in this No. 1 point in this Item No. 4, that the Marine Mammal Protection Act and its requirements for incidental take need to be addressed. You don't have to go into a whole lot more detail, but I certainly think since this is early in the document, this is what -- one point where people are going to

be looking.

Therefore, Item No. 5 is not complete either, so that, with the bowhead whale, you'd want to be also looking at all of the other marine mammal species. It's not just the bowhead whale. Yes, it's endangered, but Marine Mammal Protection Act is for all the marine mammals, and therefore, it needs to be covered.

Item No. 3 should be expanded due to the paucity of data on all of the Arctic marine mammals, and that citation of all animals during the bowhead monitoring program should be made. The recommendation here would be that that would be excha- -- possibly retitled to being Bowhead Whale and Marine Mammal Monitoring Program. If you're going to be having crews out there monitoring for bowhead whales, the documentation of belugas and other marine mammals that are sighted during that time period would be valuable. I know that's -- that it does happen in those reports, but I think it should be specifically mentioned.

MS. GOTTLIEB: Excuse me, Carl. I'm getting a little confused when you're saying "Item 3" and....

MR. HILDE: Okay. I'm....

MS. GOTTLIEB:first I thought you meant the stipulation, but I'm wrong on that.

MR. HILDE: Yeah. Yeah, it's stipulation.

MS. GOTTLIEB: Well....

1	MR. HILDE: Stipulation
2	MS. GOTTLIEB: One, perhaps?
3	MR. HILDE: Okay. Where it is?
4	MS. GOTTLIEB: Protection of biological resources on
5	page II-4, I guess
6	MR. HILDE: Yeah.
7	MS. GOTTLIEB:or page V?
8	(Pause)
9	MR. HILDE: Yeah. It would be the Industry Site-
10	Specific Bowhead Monitoring Program. Like I said, it would be
11	No. 4, not No.3.
12	MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. So I heard you say either I
13	mean, in that one or in the explanation of that one.
14	MR. HILDE: Right.
15	MS. GOTTLIEB: Talk about requirements for incidental
16	take.
17	MR. HILDE: Under the Protection of Biological
18	Species
19	MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay.
20	MR. HILDE:Item No. 4, it says,
21	"Modify operations to ensure the significant
22	biological populations or habitats
23	deserving"
24	MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay.
25	MR. HILDE: That should be expanded.

1 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. 2 In regards to all take issues and the permits required. 3 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. 4, okay. 5 MR. HILDE: And then what I'm saying is, then, under 6 the Industry Site-Specific Bowhead Monitoring Program..... 7 MS. GOTTLIEB: Right. 8 MR. HILDE:that should be expanded to bowhead 9 whale as a primary focus, but also then include all of the 10 marine mammals. 11 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. I've got it. 12 MR. HILDE: Okay. 13 MS. GOTTLIEB: Thanks. 14 I'm sorry. Okay. MR. HILDE: 15 BY MR. HILDE (Resuming): 16 The next item that I wanted to mention -- and I 17 started flipping through this because I started looking at the 18 maps, and I became concerned because last spring, President Clinton went to a meeting in Ottawa, Canada, to discuss a 19 20 number of issues, and one of the things that was on the topic 21 of discussion was the development of the Arctic Council. 22 The U.S. has opposed the Arctic Council for a number

of years now, the basic philosophy, but agreed to enter into

discussions if Canada would enter into discussions in regards

to disputed boundary between the U.S. and Canada starting at

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Demarcation Point. Canada has claimed for a long time that they claimed the area from Demarcation Point up 141 to the North Pole.

This lease sale extends into that area. I don't think this should proceed any further until there's some clarity on what's going to happen in that area. So if there's to be a recommendation, Alternative 2 is no lease sale, or Alternative 3, that the Barter Island is deferred would be two ways to address this until that boundary dispute is clarified.

And I really think that it would be unfair to all the people bidding to move forward on that particular component of this lease sale until that boundary dispute is clarified and that both nations agree to exactly to whose territory we're talking about in that corner. And that was something I did not see anywhere in the document that — as far as I've gotten, but I think it should be addressed since this is something that the State Department is currently investigating.

On page III-B.7., I would recommend that your staff, if they have not seen them, get the -- this is September '95, so you may not have seen these yet. This is the Alaska Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports from the National Marine Fisheries Service, as well as the stock assessment reports both for Pacific walrus and for the Chukchi and Bering Sea stocks of polar bears. You can see these are October 4, '95, so they've been out for less than a month. So clearly, these were not

available when the draft was prepared, but they should be now considered for the next round of this, to include the most recent data.

The other piece here. I do have a problem with the spelling of beluga. The correct common spelling is b-e-l-u-g-a, and the spelling that is used throughout this document is a white sturgeon from Russia. I don't think it's appropriate. I'm sorry.

(Laughter)

So I would recommend that since the National Marine Fisheries Service has beluga spelled one way, that we be consistent, at least on a national basis.

Page III-B.7. mentions grey whale as being described below, but it's not. Grey whales are not described anywhere in this document that I have found. And that's a major error. We spent millions of dollars, the oil companies spent millions of dollars trying to rescue three of these silly critters a few years ago, and yet they're not even mentioned anywhere in this lease sale document. And that's a major, major error.

Page III-C.9., No. 3, Subsistence Harvest Patterns.

I would again refer back to the SRAs, the stock assessment reports. They do provide the latest information on harvest numbers.

As we get further into the document -- I'm now going to shift gears. I have a fascination with thermodynamic

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issues, and under Section IV-A.28., we start talking about pipelines that are going to be put under the Arctic Ocean. yet there is no mention in any of the documents that I have seen to date that talks about biotic changes, changes of the local surrounding marine ecosystem when you start raising it a couple of temperatures by putting a heated pipe in the ground.

There's also been no mention of melting of the sea permafrost. There is a mention that it's more likely because the sea permafrost, being in the saltwater environment, is less frozen, or less cold, than the permafrost on shore, so that if you do put a heated pipe in the ground, no matter how well it's insulated, you increase the chance of having some thermoerosion under water. Also, there's no mention about having a heated source below active ice, particularly the one that parallels the coast, not the one that's perpendicular to the coast. And this might actually weaken the ice and cause a lead system to be established that has not been there in the past.

So I would suggest that there be some information here about the heat loss gradient in water, undersea gravel, on-shore gravel, and elevated pipes, whether they're under water or on shore. I think this idea of having extensive pipes carrying hot oil under Arctic ice is an area that has not been discussed in this EIS.

As has been mentioned, I think, at hearings about a lot of oil development throughout the state, is the clean-up

capability of under-ice pipeline leaks. The viability of those technologies is stated in here as not being that great, nor in broken ice or in rough sea conditions. And think this is something that needs to be considered if this area is to be developed, that those technologies have to be tested in real world conditions. And until that's done, considering the statistics, you know, we would be looking at a spill here someplace in the future and no potential for really having the technology to clean up.

Page IV, Roman Number IV-A.21., any spill -- because it does talk in this section about the possibilities of a spill -- any spill will be a take under the MMPA, even if a single seal is affected, which is quite likely considering some of the statistics given in this document. So this needs to be mentioned. And this gets back to this idea of a blanket permit, which does not exists at this point, so that the way this document currently reads, in my mind, is that the likelihood of a spill is pretty great considering the large habitat used by a variety of marine mammals. You're talking about a set-up where any activity would require a permit for an incidental take. That should be anticipated.

Again, under IV-B., starting on page XXVI, there's a Section No. 5, which talks about all of the other marine mammals, but no grey whales are listed. And they should be under Section 5, not 6, because under Section 6, there's only

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endangered species, and grey whales have been taken off the grey whale listing at this point. So grey whales should be incorporated some place in the IV-B., page XXVI.

I mentioned about the spills, and I think that that's going to be self -- something that has to be dealt with in regards to this issue of take. IV-C.1., I was surprised; this is the no action section of the document, that if nothing is done with this sale, what would the impact be. I think it was pretty poor just to summarize this in two pages. I think there needs to be some comment about the socioeconomic impacts to the local communities, North Slope Borough, and the State.

If nothing happens there, we continue as is, but what possible impact that might be -- 'cause the- -- some of these communities, I think, are basing their future on continued development in the Arctic. And if suddenly this is not available to them for any consideration, it's going to have more ramification than just no mention in this particular section.

Page IV-E.2. and other similar areas, again, I think need to address the lower trophic level organisms. This is in regards to the thermo impact of the heated pipe. And I'll mention -- but it -- it's throughout this document, there are numerous places where they talk about this lower trophic level, and there's been no mention of what happens when you put a hot pipe in the bottom of the Arctic Ocean. I think that you will

2 of a lot of those organisms. 3 IV-G.21., habitat alternation should be modified to also consider not only the spills but the thermo-pipeline 4 5 impact in the ocean -- undersea impacts. 6 IV-H.1. concludes that there will be incidental take 7 of marine mammals. This is illegal for companies to do this unless they have a permit to take, for incidental take. 8 9 that should be spelled out, that if you anticipate there will 10 be spills and that there will be high likelihood of marine 11 mammal impact, then these companies have to have these 12 incidental take permits. 13 Thank you. I will be preparing this as a written 14 document and submitting it later. 15 MS. GOTTLIEB: Great. Thanks Carl. As usual, very 16 thoughtful comments. Hope you can stay a little bit. 17 MR. HILDE: Yeah. 18 MS. GOTTLIEB: There's some things that we probably can talk about that the hearing forum isn't exactly -- but we 19 20 have.... 21 MR. HILDE: Fine. 22 MS. GOTTLIEB:some ideas to exchange with you. 23 Thank you. 24 Thank you. MR. HILDE: 25 Sandra, if you'd would like to come up MS. GOTTLIEB:

see some significant change there because of the thermo-balance

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and.... 1 2 Oh, I don't -- did I sign in for comments? 3 MS. GOTTLIEB: I thought possibly. Oh, no, I didn't have any really. 5 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. Okay. 6 I was just interested in the information. SANDRA: 7 MS. GOTTLIEB: Okay. Well, I believe then that's all our formal testifiers at this point. We'll go off the record, 8 9 and maybe we can talk a little bit. 10 And Sandra, did you have some questions for us? 11 SANDRA: No. I hadn't seen a copy of the document, 12 and I just read it in the paper, and I was mostly interested 13 to.... 14 (Laughter) 15 COURT REPORTER: Off record. 16 (Off record at 12:30 p.m.) 17 (On record at 2:50 p.m.) 18 COURT REPORTER: On record. The time is 2:50 p.m. 19 (Side comments) 20 COURT REPORTER: I took your words. 21 MS. GOTTLIEB: Very good. Having no further people signing up to testify, we'll close the public hearing. 22 23 COURT REPORTER: The time is 2:51 p.m. 24 proceedings are now adjourned. 25 / / /

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF ALASKA)	
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT)	SS
	/	

I, CINDY S. CARL, do hereby certify:

- (1) That the foregoing pages contain a full, true, and correct transcript of proceedings in the above-entitled matter, transcribed by me, or at my direction and supervision, to the best of my knowledge and ability.
- (2) That I have been certified for transcript services by the United States Courts.
- (3) That I was certified for transcript services by the Alaska Court System prior to January 1, 1993.

SIGNED AND CERTIFIED:

BY: Lindy S Carl

Cindy SV Carl

Certified Court Reporter

DATE: 12/8/95



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